



Dutch Remembrance Day is observed in Aruba

On Thursday, May 4th, the official Dutch holiday of remembrance for the lives lost during World War II was observed with a ceremony held at the War Memorial located on Adrian Lacle Boulevard at L.G. Smith Boulevard.

Holland has its own way of commemorating the Second World War and celebrating the country's liberation from five years of occupation. On May 4th and 5th, the entire country unites to observe a day of remembrance followed by a day of celebration, and in Aruba the Ceremonial Corp of the Royal Dutch Marines and a number of Dutch residents joined Aruban officials for the solemn occasion.

Since the end of the Second World War, the Dutch have observed May 4th as a day of reflection, a day to honor the victims of war. At eight o'clock in the evening, the country unites in commemorating the civilians and members of the armed forces who lost their lives in the Second World War. Unlike most countries, Holland does not mark the occasion with large military parades. People all over the country gather at war memorials in their individual communities and at the stroke of eight, the entire country observes a two-minute silence.

On Thursday, at sunset, Marine Pastor Jan Peter van Bruggen gave the benediction and led a recital of the 23rd Psalm while opening the ceremonies. After the two minutes of silence, Governor Fredis Rufenjol began the placing of the wreaths, followed by Prime Minister Nelson Oduber and President of Parliament Mervyn Wyatt-Ras. Aruba has also its own war dead to remember, and Nicky Ecury and Jan Bestiennse, who had lost relatives during the war, represented the families of those that went to battle in Europe during WW II. Other wreaths were placed Ronald de Kort, representing the Dutch government and Lieutenant Colonel Eerenberg for the Royal Dutch Marines. Two line marines also place the sixth and final wreath. The drum and fife corp of the marines played the Dutch and Aruba National Anthems, and three hymns. . Following the placing of the memorial wreaths, Prime Minister Nelson Oduber giving a brief address regarding the importance of honoring those that sacrificed and gave their lives, and passing this heritage on to our youth..

In Holland, the close of the Remembrance Day ceremony signals the start of Liberation Day festivities commemorating Germany's capitulation on May 5, 1945. War veterans gather in Wageningen, where the historic documents were signed, and parade through the city in celebration of the anniversary of liberty regained. This year is the 61st anniversary of Holland's liberation by Canada, but Aruba was never physically occupied, so it does not celebrate that day.